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Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/173, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-first session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The report reflects patterns and trends in the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and includes recommendations to improve the implementation of resolution 70/173.

* A/71/150.
** The present report was submitted after the deadline as a result of consultations with the Member State.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/173, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-first session. The report provides information on progress made in the implementation of the resolution, with a focus on the concerns identified in that resolution.

2. In preparing the report, the Secretary-General has drawn upon observations made by the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and various United Nations entities. Reference is also made to information from official State media and non-governmental organizations.

3. Since the issuance of the most recent report of the Secretary-General to the Human Rights Council on the subject (A/HRC/31/26), human rights violations have continued at an alarming rate. In particular, a significant number of executions took place, including of individuals who were juveniles at the time of the alleged offence; corporal punishment, including flogging, persisted; the treatment of journalists and human rights defenders remained of concern, as raised by several United Nations human rights mechanisms; and religious and ethnic minorities continued to face persecution and prosecution.

II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

A. Death penalty

4. On 19 October 2015, the Secretary-General expressed serious concerns about the alarming rate of executions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, He reiterated his call upon the Government to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty. That call was echoed on several occasions by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and special procedures of the Human Rights Council. The Secretary-General regrets that the Government has not taken any measures to halt executions or instituted a moratorium on the death penalty.

5. At least 966 people were reportedly executed in 2015, the highest such number in over two decades, in continuation of an upward trend that began in 2008. During the first half of 2016, at least 200 people were executed. While that number is very high, it represents a decrease in the rate of executions compared with the first half of 2015 and may be partly related to the parliamentary elections held in February 2016. Indeed, since 2009, there has been a pattern of executions dropping significantly before polling day then dramatically increasing afterwards.

6. The majority of executions pertain to drug-related offences. In their comments on the present report, the authorities maintained that the threat to security and health posed by drug trafficking, which they consider to be a most serious crime, justifies the use of the death penalty. They asserted that at least 4,000 security officers had died and 12,000 sustained injuries in the fight against drug trafficking, and that millions of dollars had been spent in that context.

7. The Human Rights Committee, which oversees the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has repeatedly stressed that drug-related offences do not meet the threshold of the most serious crimes, unless they involve intentional killing.[1]

8. Executions are often carried out following trials that fall short of the international fair trial standards guaranteed in article 14 of the Covenant, to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a State party.[2] For example, on 9 April 2016, Rashid Kouhi was executed along with two other individuals on charges of narcotics trafficking in Gilan Province. He had been sentenced to death in 2012 after he was found in possession of 800 g of crystal meth.[3] There were serious concerns about the fairness of the trial and the denial of his right to appeal. In commenting on the present report, the authorities affirmed that individuals sentenced to death were afforded due process guarantees, including access to defence counselling.

9. In February 2016, the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, Shahindokht Molaverdi, was quoted saying that there were villages in Sistan-Baluchistan Province where every man had been executed for drug-related offences. Ms. Molaverdi was critical of the lack of support by the authorities for the families of those executed.[4] On 10 April 2016, the a judiciary spokesperson stated that Ms. Molaverdi had been summoned to the prosecutor's office to provide an explanation for her comments.[5]

10. The Secretary-General is encouraged by the increased recognition among the judiciary, the executive and the legislature of the ineffectiveness of the death penalty to deter drug-related crimes. For example, on 8 March 2016, Mohammad Javad Larijani, the Secretary-General of the High Council for Human Rights, questioned the effectiveness of drug-related executions and stressed the need for amendments to the Anti-Narcotics Law, which could reduce the number of executions. He cautioned, however, that such amendments would not bring about the abolition of capital punishment for drug trafficking.[6] In December 2015, 70 members of parliament presented a bill to amend the mandatory death penalty for drug offences, providing for a penalty of life imprisonment in such cases (see A/HRC/31/26). The Secretary-General reiterates his call upon the authorities to institute a moratorium on the use of the death penalty until the new parliament debates the bill.

11. Reports of execution by hanging of women and foreign nationals continued to be received. Between January 2015 and June 2016, at least 15 women were reportedly executed, mostly for drug-related offences and murder, and at least 20 foreign nationals (mainly from Afghanistan) were executed while more than 1,200 remained on death row (see A/70/304).

12. There have been repeated failures by the judiciary to uphold fair trial procedures for individuals, especially foreign nationals, who have been accused of

[1] See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16581&LangID=E.

[2] The Anti-Narcotics Law provides for the death penalty for a myriad of lesser drug-related offences, including the possession of more than 30 g of methamphetamines.

[3] See www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/displaynews.aspx?newsID=19816&a.

[4] Mehr News Agency, 23 February 2016. Available from www.mehrnews.com/news/3561192/.

[5] Iranian Students' News Agency, 11 April 2016. Available from www.isna.ir/news/95012208372.

[6] PressTV, "Iran needs revision of drug-related laws: judiciary official", 8 March 2016. Available from www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/03/08/454570/Iran-drug-crimes-executions-Larijani/.

capital crimes. In their comments on the present report, the authorities stated that foreign nationals were informed of the consequences of engaging in drug-smuggling and were systematically afforded translation and defence counselling services.

13. Over 50 executions were carried out in public in 2015 and at least 10 during the first half of 2016. It has been reported that children were present at some of the executions. The authorities argue that public executions are rarely carried out and that they serve as a deterrent. The Secretary-General is alarmed at the persistence of that dehumanizing, cruel, inhuman and degrading practice.

14. In addition, it has been estimated that up to 60 per cent of executions reportedly took place without any prior announcement by official bodies. In many cases, the victims' families or legal representatives were not informed before the executions.

B. Execution of minors

15. The Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, special procedures mandate holders and treaty bodies have consistently expressed concerns about the execution of juvenile offenders in the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 14 April 2016, the High Commissioner expressed serious concerns about the large number of juvenile offenders reported to be on death row. He urged the authorities to ensure that no one be executed for offences committed when under the age of 18, recalling the strict prohibition on the execution of juveniles in international human rights law.

16. In his report to the thirty-first session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran referred to the execution of at least 73 juvenile offenders between 2005 and 2015 (A/HRC/31/69). He noted that, as of March 2016, at least 160 juvenile offenders were reportedly on death row.

17. Although a reform of the Islamic Penal Code in 2013 introduced exceptions to the use of the death penalty for minors, courts still sentence to death defendants who were juveniles at the time of the offence. In the concluding observations of its review of the Islamic Republic of Iran in January 2016, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted that such exceptions "are under the full discretion of judges who are allowed, but not mandated, to seek forensic expert opinion and that several persons have been re-sentenced to death following such trials" (see CRC/C/IRN/CO/3-4). The Committee urged the Islamic Republic of Iran to end the execution of children and people who had committed crimes while under the age of 18; to take legislative measures to eliminate the application of the death sentences for individuals who had committed crimes of retaliation in-kind while under the age of 18; and to commute the existing sentences for all offenders on death row for crimes committed while under the age of 18.

18. Between January 2015 and May 2016, special procedures mandate holders communicated eight urgent communications to the authorities regarding 11 juvenile offenders who were at imminent risk of execution. For example, Mohammad Ali Zehi, currently imprisoned in the Adelabad prison, is to be executed for his alleged involvement in drug trafficking activities that occurred when he was under 18 years of age. Arrested in 2008, he was reportedly sentenced to death by a revolutionary

court, tortured and forced to make a false confession. He was denied access to family members for two months and to a lawyer until the start of his trial (see A/HRC/32/53).

19. In their comments on the present report, the authorities stated that no juvenile was executed in 2016 and that the judiciary was endeavouring to prevent juvenile executions, including by encouraging victims' families and perpetrators to reach a settlement and offering financial aid. They also argued that retaliation in-kind was a right of the victims' families that could not be overruled by the judiciary.

C. Torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment

20. Despite the entry into force, in June 2015, of some safeguards in the form of a revised Code of Criminal Procedure, protections against torture still do not meet international standards. The Code does not define a specific crime of torture, leaving prisoners at risk of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In addition, the exclusion of statements obtained through torture from admissible evidence is not supported by detailed provisions in the Code. The Secretary-General is concerned about the ongoing trend of using threats of torture, or actual torture, to extract forced confessions or other self-incriminatory evidence from prisoners or individuals detained by the police, especially those incarcerated for political ends. Such confessions are often used as admissible evidence in court proceedings. Moreover, the right of detainees to have access to a lawyer from the moment of detention is still not guaranteed.

21. Political prisoners appear to be particularly at risk of torture. Such is the case of Zeinab Jalalian, an Iranian of Kurdish origin, who was reportedly arrested by intelligence security officers in March 2008 while travelling from Kermanshah to Sanandaj. The officers reportedly violently kicked her, tied her hands and feet, and took her to the Naft Square detention centre, in Kermanshah. While in detention, Ms. Jalalian was allegedly subjected to lengthy interrogations and beatings and was held in solitary confinement for months. She was also reportedly threatened with rape and subjected to other forms of torture, including having her head hit against a wall, being flogged on her feet and being made to walk on her injured feet back to the interrogation room. Following a short trial, a court of first instance sentenced her to death in December 2008. The sentence was reportedly upheld by the Appellate Court of Kermanshah (see A/HRC/WGAD/2016/1). In their comments on the present report, the authorities reported that Ms. Jalalian was sentenced to death on charges of armed action against the system, membership in the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan, carrying and keeping unauthorized weapons and military equipment and engaging in propaganda against the system. They stated that Ms. Jalalian had recently been granted clemency and that her sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment.

22. The state of prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran remains a major concern, owing to extensive overcrowding and high incarceration rates. Over the past two decades, an average of 300,000 people have been incarcerated annually, 50 per cent of whom have been jailed for drug-related offences. Extremely limited living space, poor quality food, an insufficient number of toilets and showers and inadequate heating are all common features in many detention facilities.

1. Solitary confinement

23. Special procedures mandate holders continued to receive reports of widespread use of solitary confinement. According to those reports, the authorities reportedly routinely subject detainees and prisoners to solitary confinement for a period that could range from a week to years and, in some instances, for an indefinite period. For instance, Mohammad Ali Taheri, who is the founder of a spiritual movement, a writer and a practitioner of alternative medical treatments used in the Islamic Republic of Iran and abroad, has been held in solitary confinement since his arrest in May 2011. He was sentenced to five years in prison for insulting the sanctity of Islam. Although he has served his sentence, he has not been released.

24. The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment argued that, while solitary confinement for short periods of time may be justified under certain circumstances and with adequate and effective safeguards in place, the use of prolonged or indefinite solitary confinement may never constitute a legitimate instrument since it may cause severe mental suffering and physical pain and runs afoul of the absolute prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (see A/HRC/31/57/Add.1).

2. Access to adequate health care

25. People deprived of their liberty, particularly political prisoners, continue to receive inadequate access to health care. In many cases, medical treatment is reportedly withheld as a form of punishment to a degree so severe as to constitute torture. On 27 April 2016, a group of Special Rapporteurs publicly expressed concern at the situation of over a dozen political prisoners at risk of death owing to their worsening health conditions and the continued refusal by the authorities to provide them with medical treatment.

26. Among prisoners being denied access to proper medical treatment is Omid Kokabee, an experimental laser physicist. He was arrested in January 2011 upon his return from studies in the United States of America and is serving a 10-year prison sentence for alleged connections to a hostile government. Mr. Kokabee was diagnosed with kidney cancer and had to have his right kidney removed owing to the lack of timely and appropriate treatment. Following an international outcry, on 25 May 2016, Mr. Kokabee was granted a two-week medical leave.[7] His situation appears to be emblematic of a pattern whereby the authorities have denied political prisoners access to medical treatment, either by refusing to transfer them to a hospital to receive specialized treatment or by returning them to prison shortly after a major surgery. In their comments on the present report, the authorities stated that medical facilities with standard medical services exist in prisons, and that medical services are provided free of charge. They reported that prisoners have access to welfare facilities, shops, hairdressers, gymnasiums, educational and cultural classes, cinemas and libraries and frequently meet with family and relatives.

27. The United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particular special procedures mandate holders, have repeatedly drawn the attention of the authorities to allegations related to the denial of access to medical care and to substandard

[7] International Campaign For Human Rights in Iran, "Imprisoned physicist given two-week medical furlough after losing cancerous kidney", 25 May 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/05/omid-kokabee-8/.

conditions of detention, urging them to embark on more comprehensive prison reform. Of the 14 communications sent to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran by special procedures mandate holders during the first five months of 2016, six pertained to access to health care for people in detention. The Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee have consistently stressed that inadequate conditions of detention can be a form of inhuman and degrading treatment. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provides that all prisons shall ensure prompt access to medical care in urgent cases and that prisoners who require specialized treatment or surgery shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals (see A/HRC/31/57/Add.1).

3. Flogging

28. The recurrence of flogging remains a cause for serious concern. The Islamic Penal Code, which came into force in 2013, provides for the punishment of flogging for insulting the prophets, sodomy, rape, adultery and alcohol consumption. There are reports that that punishment has also been meted-out for not fasting, not respecting the Islamic dress code, participating in protests, holding mixed-gender parties and shaking hands with an unrelated person of the opposite sex. The authorities defend flogging as a punishment, arguing it is applied as a means of dissuasion and an alternative to imprisonment and its social, ethical and economic consequences.

29. On 31 May 2016, the spokesperson of the High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the flogging, on 26 May, of 35 students, after they were found holding a graduation party in Qazvin. According to State media, within a 24-hour interval, the students were arrested, interrogated, sentenced by the Prosecutor's Office to 99 lashes each and flogged. In a similar case in May, 17 mine workers were reportedly flogged in Western Azerbaijan Province for protesting against the dismissal of 350 workers from the Agh Dara gold mine. That sentence prompted reactions from parliamentarians, with some condemning the punishment as inhumane and medieval.[8] On 10 June, blogger and writer Mohammad Reza Fathi was sentenced to 444 lashes for spreading lies and disturbing public opinion.[9]

30. The Committee against Torture, the Human Rights Committee and special procedures mandate holders have repeatedly voiced concerns about the use of flogging, highlighting in particular its use against women, and called for its abolition.[10]

4. Stoning to death

31. On 20 January 2016, in a joint communication, a group of special procedure mandate holders[11] expressed concerns at the imminent risk of execution by stoning of Fariba Khalegi, who was arrested in November 2013 on suspicion of involvement in the murder of her husband. Ms. Khalegi was initially released without charges but

[8] Iran Emroz News, 1 June 2016. Available from www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news1/62267/.
[9] Atreyas News, 10 June 2016. Available from www.atreyas.ir/26977.
[10] See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20037&LangID=E.
[11] Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in Iran, on extrajudicial killings, on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

was later charged with having a sexual relationship with her husband's alleged murderer. On 15 October 2014, she was reportedly convicted of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning. On 27 January 2015, the Supreme Court reportedly upheld the sentence. Article 225 of the new Islamic Penal Code prescribes stoning as a punishment for people convicted of adultery. In their comments on the present report, the authorities argued that the criminalization of adultery is consistent with an interpretation of Islamic law, and that the punishments outlined in sharia law are effective in deterring crimes and protecting morality. They added that, according to the Islamic Penal Code, judges, using their knowledge and wisdom, can hand down the punishment of stoning on the basis of circumstantial evidence.

32. The United Nations human rights mechanisms hold the view that execution by stoning constitutes a form of torture or other cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment or punishment. The Human Rights Committee has also concluded that stoning to death for adultery is a punishment that is grossly disproportionate to the nature of the crime.[12]

D. Freedom of expression

33. The Secretary-General notes the commitment by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to loosening restrictions on freedom of expression and his acknowledgment of freedom of speech as a basic human right. During the reporting period there has been little progress, however, and far more erosion of freedom of expression and opinion.

34. The Secretary-General is particularly concerned about the persistent pattern of arbitrary arrests and convictions of journalists and online activists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Islamic Republic of Iran has imprisoned the third greatest number of journalists of any country in the world[13] and is the seventh most censored country in the world.[14] As of March 2016, at least 47 journalists and Internet users were reportedly imprisoned in the Islamic Republic of Iran (see A/HRC/31/69).

35. The Secretary-General calls upon the authorities to immediately cease the arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals for the peaceful and legitimate exercise of their right to freedom of opinion and expression and to release said individuals who have been imprisoned. He also reiterates that unjustified restrictions on accessing media are contrary to the principle of human dignity and violate numerous human rights.

36. The Secretary-General reiterates his condemnation of the unreasonable and disproportionate sentences imposed on a journalist at the daily newspaper *Iran*, Afarine Chitsaz, the editor of the daily newspaper *Farhikhteghan*, Ehssan Mazandarani, a journalist at the monthly publication *Andisheh Pouya*, Saman Safarzai, and the brother of an editor of the opposition news website *Roozonline*, Davoud Asadi, as well as the situation of Issa Saharkhiz, an independent journalist

[12] Human Rights Committee, general comment 20 (1992).

[13] Committee to Protect Journalists, "2015 prison census: 199 journalists jailed worldwide", 1 December 2015. Available from https://cpj.org/imprisoned/2015.php.

[14] Committee to Protect Journalists, "10 most censored countries". Available from https://cpj.org/2015/04/10-most-censored-countries.php.

currently in detention and suffering from health problems. The five individuals were arrested in November 2015 by plain-clothed members of the Revolutionary Guard's intelligence units for allegedly taking part in an "infiltration network" seeking to influence public opinion and undermine the Islamic Republic on behalf of western Governments. In April 2016, Ms. Chitsaz, Mr. Mazandarani, Mr. Safarzai and Mr. Asadi were found guilty of multiple charges, including "spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic" and "acting against national security and contacting foreign governments". They were given sentences ranging from 5 to 10 years of imprisonment.

37. Additionally, Hossein Ronaghi, a human rights activists and blogger, arrested and sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment in 2009, remains in jail despite his failing health. On 25 May 2015, Mohammad Hossein Rafiee Fanood, a gravely ill 72-year-old retired professor of polymer chemistry at the University of Tehran, was sentenced to a six-year prison sentence and a two-year ban on political and journalistic activities in connection with writings on social and political issues that had been posted to his website.

1. Artistic expression

38. The Secretary-General is concerned about a range of violations of the right to freedom of expression in domains other than journalism, such as creative arts and music. For instance, Mehdi Rajabian, a musician and founder of Barg Music, an alternative music distributor in the Islamic Republic of Iran, his brother, Hossein Rajabian, a film maker, and Yousef Emadi, a musician, were arrested in October 2013 by the Revolutionary Guards and were held in solitary confinement for over two months, during which they were subjected to intense pressure to make false televised confessions. Mr. Mehdi Rajabian was reportedly subjected to repeated torture while in detention. In late February 2016, the three men were each officially sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of 50 million rials (about $1,650) after appealing their original sentences of six years in prison and a 2 billion rial fine.[15] They were charged with "insulting the sacred" and "propaganda against the State" through the production and promotion of underground music.[16] The treatment of those men appears to be solely related to the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity.

39. The Secretary-General welcomes the release, on 4 May 2016, of Atena Farghdani, an artist and cartoonist. She had been arrested on 20 January 2015 on charges of spreading propaganda against the system and insulting members of parliament through paintings. In June 2015, she was sentenced to 12 and a half years imprisonment, of which she has served approximately six months.

2. Persecution of social media activists

40. The Secretary-General deplores the increasing persecution of social media activists. In May 2016, the authorities arrested at least eight Instagram users, most

[15] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Iranian music distributors sentenced to three years in prison", 1 March 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/03/iranian-music-distributors-sentenced/.

[16] Freemuse, "Art under threat: attacks on artistic freedom in 2015", 22 February 2016. Available from http://freemuse.org/archives/11751.

of whom were leading models in the Iranian fashion industry, for "un-Islamic acts" and "promoting Western promiscuity".[17]

41. An Iranian cybercrime surveillance programme entitled "Operation Spider 2", which tracks and cracks down on social media users, has so far resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of several Internet users on charges such as "insulting Islam", "publishing immoral and corrupt material" and "encouraging individuals to commit immoral acts".[18]

42. The most recent directive issued by the country's Supreme Council of Cyberspace, in May 2016, requires social messaging applications to store user data on Iranian servers.[19] That directive allows the authorities to have access to the 20 million Iranian accounts associated with the Telegram messaging application, strengthening the already stringent censorship regime with respect to Internet traffic.[20] Telegram, the use of which comprises more than 50 per cent of weekly Internet traffic in the country, has faced restrictions, with over 50 channels containing messages to the public being blocked after authorities complained about the presence of pornographic content. Furthermore, the judiciary retains the power to block applications in the future.[21]

43. Facebook and Twitter continued to be entirely blocked for domestic users, and the authorities arbitrarily ban content under the justification of protecting families and Islamic culture.[22] Confirming that there are restrictions on the use of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, the authorities claimed that those measures aimed to prevent terrorist activities, the promotion of extremism and violence and breaches of privacy. In May 2016, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace threatened to ban all social media companies operating in the country if they did not hand over all data related to Iranian users.[23]

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[17] Richard Spencer and Ahmed Vahdat, "Iranian models arrested and forced to give public self-criticism for posting pictures without headscarves", *Telegraph*, 16 May 2016. Available from www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/16/iranian-models-arrested-for-posting-pictures-without-headscarves/.

[18] Radiozamaneh, "News sites under close scrutiny for 'election offences'", 25 January 2016. Available from https://en.radiozamaneh.com/featured/news-sites-under-close-scrutiny-for-election-offences.

[19] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Hardline council fires new shot against Rouhani administration in battle over social media in Iran", 3 June 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/06/social-media-servers-transfer-to-ran/.

[20] Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Telegram: the instant messaging app freeing up Iranians' conversations", *Guardian*, 8 February 2016. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/08/telegram-the-instant-messaging-app-freeing-up-iranians-conversations.

[21] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Popular telegram messaging application survives censorship vote in Iran", 7 January 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/01/telegram-not-filtered/.

[22] Radio Zamaneh, "Ministry funds Internet 'smart filtering' at 11 universities", 14 February 2016. Available from https://en.radiozamaneh.com/featured/ministry-funds-internet-smart-filtering-at-11-universities/.

[23] Emirates 24 News, "Iran's deadline for social media firms", 30 May 2016. Available from www.emirates247.com/news/iran-s-deadline-for-social-media-firms-2016-05-30-1.631506.

E. Treatment of refugees

44. The Secretary-General appreciates that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to host 951,000 refugees, one of the largest refugee communities in the world, the majority of whom come from Afghanistan.[24] The authorities have taken important measures to ensure access to education and health care for refugees.[25] According to the Ministry of Education, 360,693 Afghan and 8,586 Iraqi students were enrolled in the education system of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 2014-2015 school year. In May 2015, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that all Afghans, regardless of their status, should have access to school.[26] Previously, children of unregistered refugees had been barred from attending school.

45. In 2015, the Government signed a tripartite agreement with the Iran Health Insurance Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to bring about the inclusion of nearly 1 million Iraqi and Afghan refugees in the government-sponsored universal public health insurance scheme. It provides access to health-care services in all public hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health.[27]

46. However, refugees continue to face inequality, discrimination and mistreatment. Only refugees with work permits issued through the Amayesh system are able to work.[28] Many barriers to marriage between Iranians and undocumented refugees remain, with women being unable to transmit citizenship to their children and their non-citizen spouses. Children born out of wedlock cannot obtain birth certificates or travel documents and are automatically barred from accessing public services.[29]

47. The majority of provinces have imposed residency restrictions on refugees.[30] In July 2016, authorities in Yazd Province warned citizens not to rent houses to non-native Iranians, in particular Afghan refugees, and ordered them to evict any such residents from their houses within 15 days.[31]

48. The forced deportation of refugees remains of concern. Between March 2014 and March 2015, 216,923 individuals, including 1,772 children, were reportedly forcibly deported from the Islamic Republic of Iran.[32] Fifty-five per cent of those

[24] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Mid-year trends 2015" (Geneva, 2015). Available from www.unhcr.org/56701b969.pdf.

[25] Submission by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence.

[26] Islamic Republic News Agency, "Over 360,000 Afghan students study in Iranian schools: official", 25 April 2016. Available from www.irna.ir/en/News/82048154/.

[27] UNHCR, "2015 Global strategy implementation report" (Geneva, 2015). Available from www.unhcr.org/protection/livelihoods/56e80adb9/2015-global-strategy-implementation-report.html?query=Iran.

[28] Amayesh is a refugee registration system introduced in 2003 to reregister all Afghan nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran who had been granted residency rights.

[29] Human Rights Watch, "Unwelcome guests: Iran's violation of Afghan refugee and migrant rights", 20 November 2013. Available from www.hrw.org/report/2013/11/20/unwelcome-guests/irans-violation-afghan-refugee-and-migrant-rights.

[30] Ibid.

[31] BBC Persian, 13 June 2016. Available from www.bbc.com/persian/iran/2016/06/160613_l57_zarach_yazd_antiimmigrant_banner.

[32] Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, "Afghan returnees' situation overview", 19 December 2015. Available from www.aihrc.org.af/home/press_release/5233.

children were unaccompanied.[33] In most cases, deportees have not been given an eviction notice and have been forcefully evicted from the country, leaving behind belongings and properties. Afghan deportees often face severe conditions in overcrowded detention centres that lack drinking water and are often subjected to mistreatment, physical abuse, exploitation and harassment.[34]

49. The Secretary-General remains concerned about the indiscriminate firing by Iranian border police on Afghans who are attempting to cross into the Islamic Republic of Iran without papers, which often results in fatalities, including the death of children. In early April 2016, a group of 14 Afghans, among whom were children, tried to cross the border into Herat province at night to look for employment in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The group was reportedly confronted by Iranian border police patrol teams that opened fire on the group, killing three, including a 14-year-old boy, injuring four and arresting the remaining seven. The latter were immediately deported, whereas those who were wounded, including a 13-year old boy, were treated at a hospital before being deported to Afghanistan. On 9 April 2016, the Iranian authorities reportedly handed over the bodies of the three dead men to the Afghan border authorities. On 8 May 2016, Iranian border security forces reportedly killed 6 Afghans, who were attempting to cross into the Islamic Republic of Iran, and injured 18 others.[35]

50. There are also concerns about the recruitment and deployment of Afghan refugees and migrants, including minors, by Iranian authorities to fight in the Syrian Arab Republic.[36]

F. Situation of civil society actors

51. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders expressed serious concerns about the continuing pattern of arbitrary arrest, detention and prosecution of human rights defenders as an attempt to prevent them from engaging in legitimate and peaceful human rights activities (see A/HRC/31/55/Add.1). Human rights activists and lawyers are routinely subjected to ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement, degrading conditions in detention, psychological and physical torture and denial of urgent medical treatment. They are often convicted on questionable charges and given excessive prison sentences after trials that do not meet the basic requirement of the right to due process under international human rights law.

52. On 20 May 2016, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and special procedures mandate holders expressed outrage at the conviction and sentencing of

[33] According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, on average at least 20 individuals under the age of 18 are deported to Afghanistan every day. See www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2016/06/160615_kk_human_rights_iran_deportation_underage.

[34] Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, "Afghan returnees' situation overview", 19 December 2015. Available from www.aihrc.org.af/home/press_release/5233.

[35] Tolonews, "Six killed in shootout on truck smuggling Afghans into Iran", 9 May 2016. Available from www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/25188-six-killed-in-shootout-on-truck-smuggling-afghans-into-iran.

[36] Human Rights Watch, "Iran sending thousands of Afghans to fight in Syria: refugees, migrants report deportation threats", 29 January 2016. Available from www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/29/iran-sending-thousands-afghans-fight-syria.

Nargis Mohammadi, a prominent human rights defender.[37] On 18 May 2016, the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced Ms. Mohammadi to 16 years in prison for her activities on behalf of a grassroots organization advocating the abolition of the death penalty. She was charged with "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the state" and allegedly tried behind closed doors. Despite her having serious medical conditions, she has reportedly not been granted adequate access to specialized medical care. Prior to her arrest on 5 May 2015, Ms. Mohammadi was subjected to constant harassment, verbal assaults and interrogations by authorities for her peaceful human rights activities.[38]

53. Several other prominent human rights activists and lawyers, including Abdulfattah Soltani, Bahareh Hedayat and Mohammad Seddiqh Kaboudvand, are serving lengthy prison sentences. Mr. Kaboudvand, a Kurdish human rights activist who is in the ninth year of a 10-year sentence at Evin prison, in Tehran, has been facing new charges since October 2015. He has been singled out as a political prisoner for years and has been denied medical care despite the possibility that he may have prostate cancer. In May 2016, he went on a hunger strike in protest against the new charges, which led to a rapid deterioration of his health. After 36 days of protest, on 13 June 2016, he was released on a 4-day furlough.[39]

54. The sentencing of human rights activists illustrates the continuing shrinking space for human rights defenders and other civil society actors. The Secretary-General urges the authorities to stop targeting human rights defenders and other civil society actors who are peacefully exercising fundamental freedoms and to open up space for those individuals to conduct their essential work freely and safely. The Secretary-General calls upon the authorities to ensure the prompt release of Ms. Mohammadi, Mr. Soltani, Mr. Hedayat and Mr. Kaboudvand and all those detained for merely exercising their human rights.

G. The situation of women

55. In their comments on the present report, the authorities stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran had made remarkable achievements in the promotion of women's rights, in particular in the field of education and health. They also noted that women were represented at the highest political level, including as that of vice-president, that their participation in economic and social affairs had been promoted and measures to combat violence against them taken.

56. Although it is a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made little progress towards gender equality and has yet to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The crackdown on women's rights activists, female journalists and lawyers has continued during the reporting period. Many have faced intimidation and harassment and, in some cases, detention or travel bans.

[37] See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=19996&LangID=E.

[38] See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=19998&LangID=E.

[39] Pen International, "Iran: Kurdish journalist released on four-day furlough", 14 June 2016. Available from www.pen-international.org/newsitems/iran-kurdish-journalist-released-on-four-day-furlough/.

57. A renowned anthropologist who holds Canadian, Irish and Iranian citizenship, Homa Hoodfar, has been arbitrarily detained at Evin prison since 6 June 2016, without due process, charge or trial and without legal representation or communication with her family.[40] She was subjected to a series of interrogations and arrests after travelling to the Islamic Republic of Iran to visit her family and to gain access to the archives of the Iranian parliamentary library for a historical book project. Security forces affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards reportedly raided her home on 9 March 2016 and confiscated her passports, research documents, computer and other personal belongings. She reportedly underwent intensive interrogation sessions for up to nine hours at a time. Ms. Hoodfar suffers from a rare neurological condition that requires regular medication and health care, to which she has not had access since her detention began. Some official Iranian news outlets depicted Ms. Hoodfar as a co-founder and leader of a network plotting against Islamic values by focusing its research on feminism.[41] The authorities claimed that Ms. Hoodfar was being detained for acts against national security, that she had access to medical facilities and that she was under the constant supervision of a doctor.

58. Violations of the rights to freedom of movement and expression and the rights to health and work seriously affect women, as do the practices of underage marriage, killings in the name of honour and female genital mutilation.[42] According to reports, 60 per cent of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran experience domestic violence (see A/HRC/31/69). According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2015*, 21 per cent of Iranian women 19 years of age and under were married.[43]

59. The Secretary-General urges the Government to take steps to address the widespread practices of domestic violence and underage marriage, including the establishment of an appropriate legislative framework to address those issues.

60. The February 2016 parliamentary elections led to an increase in representation of women from 3 to 6 per cent. More efforts are required, however, to overcome the absence of women in decision-making positions and the social barriers they face. In some places, those barriers are institutionalized. Minoo Khaleghi, a recently elected member of parliament, was barred from taking office reportedly because she shook the hand of a man.[44] Article 1117 of the Civil Code allows men to prevent their wives from being employed (in both the public and private sectors) if they consider that employment to be "incompatible with the interests of the family or with his or

[40] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Authorities Reverse Decision to Release Detained Dual National Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe", 21 June 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/06/nazanin-zaghari-irgc-claim/.

[41] Mashregh News, 15 June 2016. Available from www.mashreghnews.ir/fa/news/590029.

[42] In their comments on the present report, the authorities acknowledged the occurrence of underage marriage in rural areas and attributed it to geographical conditions and the physical and sexual maturity of boys and girls. They also noted that fewer cases of female genital mutilation happen in villages that are under the cultural influence of neighbouring countries. The authorities stressed that efforts are being made to increase public awareness in those areas through health centres and religious leaders.

[43] World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2015* (Geneva, 2015). Available from http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=IRN.

[44] Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Iran bars female MP for 'shaking hands with unrelated man'", 15 April 2016. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/15/iran-bars-female-mp-for-shaking-hands-with-unrelated-man.

his wife's dignity".[45] The Civil Code also requires women to be submissive to men and specifies that they may lose their rights, including to maintenance, if they fail to respond to the sexual needs of their husbands.[46]

61. Senior government leaders have consistently made remarks that reinforce the traditional cultural roles for women. On several occasions, the Supreme Leader commented on the role of women in society and stressed that women's greatest responsibility is to bear children and that women's employment is not a primary concern of the country.[47] That widespread attitude reflects the fact that only around 17 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 64 are active in the labour market. While women in general face barriers, the situation is more acute for those of lower economic status and members of minority groups, in particular the Baha'i.

62. The Secretary-General notes the improvement recorded in the *Global Gender Gap Report 2015*, which shows a gender parity index of 0.98 in the context of primary school enrolment. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ranked 106th of 145 countries in terms of educational attainment, according to a calculation that takes into account literacy rates and enrolments at all levels of the educational system.

H. Treatment of individuals belonging to religious and ethnic minorities

63. The special procedures mandate holders and treaty bodies have referred to the Baha'i as the most severely persecuted religious minority in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with its members subjected to multiple forms of discrimination that affect their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

64. In his report to the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association expressed concern at the denial of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association to religious minorities that are not recognized in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,[48] especially members of the Baha'i community, noting that they were regularly prohibited from engaging in peaceful assemblies (see A/HRC/32/36).

65. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, access to education at technical and vocational universities and non-governmental educational institutions is restricted according to one's religion. "Belief in the religion of Islam or one of the divine religions specified in the Constitution" is an essential requirement for enrolment. That requirement has prevented Baha'is from applying, and some have had their applications rejected as "incomplete" despite having taken the national university entrance examination.

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[45] Amnesty International, "You shall procreate: attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran" (London, 2015). Available from www.amnesty.ch/de/laender/naher-osten-nordafrika/iran/dok/2015/iran-frauen-sollen-zu-gebaermaschinen-degradiert-werden/you-shall-procreate.

[46] See Civil Code, article 1108.

[47] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Societal demand in Iran for female representation in Government is unstoppable", 22 March 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/03/women-victory-in-parliamentary-elections.

[48] The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran only recognizes Muslims, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians.

66. On 8 March 2016, Rohie Safajoo was arrested for allegedly "acting against national security on cyberspace" and was released on 27 March 2016 after posting a bail of 500 million rials (about $16,500). In 2014 and 2015, although she had passed the annual university exam, her results were withheld owing to her Baha'i faith, and she was consequently unable to pursue higher education. Ms. Safajoo became active on social media, referring on her Facebook page to the persecution that she and other Baha'is faced.[49] On 29 January 2016, three Baha'i university students, Ali Kholghi, Farhang Rouhi and Nabil Zeinali, were expelled from the Open University of Kerman owing to their faith.

67. The Baha'i community also continues to suffer from severe economic pressure. Baha'i-owned businesses have been shut down by the authorities and vandalized in a number of cities, in particular after proprietors temporarily closed their businesses to observe Baha'i holidays. During the first half of June 2016, at least 25 shops belonging to Baha'is were reportedly shut down in Urumia alone. Although authorities did not disclose the reasons for the shut downs, some Baha'is believe they may have been linked to the observance of Baha'i holidays.[50]

68. The shutting down of business and shops negatively impacts the livelihoods of the Baha'i, who already face restrictions on their access to employment in the public and private sectors. The Secretary-General urges the Government to allow the Baha'i to fully participate in the economic growth and development of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to be granted access to education without obstructions.

69. The authorities claim that no Baha'i has been prosecuted because of his or her beliefs. They state that the Baha'i enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, are able to pursue higher education at the masters and doctorate levels and can work in the fields of production, trade and services.

70. The Secretary-General is further concerned about the increase in inflammatory comments by religious, judicial and political officials as well as the media against Baha'is. On 8 June 2016, the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and on freedom of religion or belief expressed serious concern about incidents of incitement to hatred against the Baha'i community, noting that that could possibly encourage acts of violence against them.[51]

71. Since the visit of Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of a former president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, to the home of Fariba Kamalabadi, one of the seven former Baha'i leaders who had been in prison since 2008, a total of 169 religious and political leaders have openly condemned the Baha'i community in speeches or in writing. On 18 May 2016, the spokesman of the judiciary, Gholamanhossein Mohseni Ejei, stated at a press conference that charges would be brought against Ms. Hashemi for that meeting, which he labelled a "very ugly and obscene act".

[49] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Young woman's quest for higher education exposes Iran's discrimination against Baha'is", 1 April 2016. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2016/04/rouhie-safajoo/.

[50] BBC Persian, 22 June 2016. See www.bbc.com/persian/iran/2016/06/160611_l39_bahaii_stores_sealed.

[51] See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20073&LangID=E.

72. On 20 May 2016, Ayatollah Imami Kashini, one of the most senior clerics in the Islamic Republic of Iran, referred to the Baha'i as a "polluted sect" and "the enemy" in public sermons. The Association of Friday Prayer Leaders also condemned the Baha'i with similar hateful language in 25 of the 31 provinces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sermons labelled the Baha'i faith as "a fabricated political party masquerading as a religion and ideological belief". Furthermore, hundreds of media pieces inciting religious hatred and encouraging violence against the Baha'i appeared after the sermons of the Friday prayer leaders had been delivered. The editor of a major newspaper affiliated with State authorities openly referred to members of the Baha'i community as members of the "Zionist party". Fatwas written decades ago, along with newly written ones, that forbid Muslims from consorting with "infidel" Baha'is, have been republished. The systemic spreading of explicitly hateful rhetoric will only incite more prejudice and violence towards the already marginalized Baha'i community.

73. Discrimination and persecution of other minority groups also remain prevalent. Ethnic minority groups, including Arabs, Azeris, Baluch and Kurds, face discrimination in gaining access to university studies, employment, business licences and economic aid, getting permission to publish books and exercising their civil and political rights. Those groups are deprived of the right to teach in their native languages in schools. The authorities have only recently introduced Kurdish language and literature programmes in the curriculum of some high schools and universities in Kurdistan Province.[52] The Baluch-dominated Sistan-Baluchistan Province remains severely underdeveloped, with inhabitants having limited access to education, employment, health care and housing. Frequently, Baluch journalists and human rights activists face arbitrary arrest, physical abuse during detention and unfair trials. The Government also discriminates against Azeris by prohibiting the use of the Azeri language in schools and through harassment of Azeris.

III. Cooperation with the international human rights mechanisms

A. Cooperation with the United Nations treaty bodies

74. The Secretary-General welcomes the continued engagement of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the treaty bodies, notably through the submission of periodic reports and its dialogue with experts. On 11 and 12 January 2016, the Committee on the Rights of Child considered the combined third and fourth periodic report of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CRC/C/IRN/3-4). During the review, the Committee raised a wide range of issues, including the legal definition of the child, the execution of juvenile offenders, discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, children born out of wedlock, unregistered refugees, migrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, underage marriage, the practice of killing in the name of honour and female genital mutilation.

[52] See www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3660/2016/en/.

B. Cooperation with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council

75. While welcoming the increasing dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Secretary-General regrets the Government's continued refusal to grant the Special Rapporteur access for a country visit, which could assist in identifying areas of concerns and in developing appropriate measures to address them for the benefit of all people in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

76. The Secretary-General welcomes the invitations extended by the Government to the Special Rapporteurs on the right to food and on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, and encourages the Government to respond positively to visit requests from the Special Rapporteurs on the independence of judges and lawyers; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; freedom of religion or belief; minority issues; and the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

77. A total of 20 communications concerning urgent individual cases or emerging issues were transmitted by special procedure mandate holders to the Government during the first half of 2016. Of those, 19 were urgent actions and 1 was an allegation letter sent jointly by several thematic special procedures mandate holders. The Government responded to four of the communications.

78. During its seventy-fifth session, in April 2016, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted two opinions on the Islamic Republic of Iran and raised individual cases with the authorities through letters.

C. United Nations Development Assistance Framework

79. Given the serious human rights situation in the country, the Secretary-General is disappointed that the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2017-2021 lacks reference to human rights and gender equality. The Secretary-General expects that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations system will implement programming under the Framework from a human rights and a gender perspective that specifically abides by national and international human rights obligations. That is also in the spirit of the Government's commitment to human rights under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals contained therein.

IV. Recommendations

80. The Secretary-General remains deeply troubled by reports of executions, floggings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, unfair trials, denial of access to medical care and possible torture and ill-treatment. He is also concerned about continued restrictions of public freedoms and the related persecution of civil society actors, the persistence of discrimination against women and minorities and conditions of detention.

81. The Secretary-General reiterates his call upon the Government to introduce a moratorium on the use of the death penalty and to prohibit

executions of juvenile offenders and those who were below 18 years of age at the time the offence was committed.

82. The Secretary-General urges the Government to create space for civil society actors to exercise their legitimate right to peacefully carry out their activities in safety and freedom, without fear of arrest, detention or prosecution, and to release political prisoners, including human rights defenders and lawyers, detained solely for legitimately and peacefully exercising their rights to the freedoms of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly.

83. The Secretary-General urges the Government to remove all discriminatory provisions in legislation that affect women, in accordance with international standards, and to develop comprehensive national strategies to address harmful and violent practices against women and girls, including underage marriage. He urges the Government to take concrete and strong measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in all spheres of life.

84. The Secretary-General urges the Government to take prompt steps to protect the rights of all persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities and to remove and address all forms of discrimination against them.

85. The Secretary-General welcomes the Government's engagement with United Nations human rights treaty bodies and urges it to follow up on the concluding observations of all treaty bodies. The Secretary-General calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

86. The Secretary-General regrets that, despite repeated requests for a country visit, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran has not been granted access to the country. The Secretary-General renews his call upon the Government to fully cooperate with the Special Rapporteur by inviting him to the country, as well as thematic special procedure mandate holders, in line with the standing invitation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

United Nations A/71/375

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 September 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 74 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 8 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit a joint statement from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait (see annex), dated 26 July 2016, regarding the repeated transgression of Iranian military boats of the waters of the submerged area between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 74 (a).

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

* A/71/150.

16-15624 (E) 150916 150916

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 8 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

26 July 2016

The Permanent Missions of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the United Nations present their compliments to the Secretary-General and have the honour to inform him that Iranian military vessels have carried out repeated acts of aggression and trespass into the waters of the submerged zone adjacent to the divided zone between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (the submerged divided zone), over which those two States have exclusive sovereign rights to explore and exploit natural resources. Recently, two such violations were committed. The first was by a support vessel and two speed boats flying the Iranian flag, each with three armed personnel aboard, at 1335 hours on Wednesday, 20 April 2016. The second was by an Iranian Hendijan-class support vessel (Hendijan 1401) at 0732 hours on Thursday, 21 April 2016. Both vessels and the two speed boats approached Durrah well No. 3 (D3) in the Durrah oilfield (coordinates 28°58'36" N 49°06'16" E) in the Saudi Arabian-Kuwaiti submerged divided zone. Such actions could lead to confrontations endangering peace and security in the region.

It is well known that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have exclusive sovereign rights to explore and exploit hydrocarbon resources in the Durrah field and the submerged divided zone.

The Governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait strongly protest and deplore these repeated acts of aggression and trespass, and demand that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran put an end to them. They make that demand with a view to preserving their interests, ensuring respect for their rights in the area and maintaining security and stability there.

The two Governments have asked the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for negotiations to delimit the maritime boundary between the submerged divided zone and the waters of the Islamic Republic of Iran in accordance with international law. However, despite repeated appeals, the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have yet to receive a response from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to their calls for negotiations to delimit that maritime boundary.

The Permanent Missions of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait request that this letter should be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and published in the next Law of the Sea Bulletin.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia

(*Signed*) Mansour Ayyad SH A **Alotaibi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Kuwait

United Nations A/71/376

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 September 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 19 of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development

Global assessment of sand and dust storms

Note by the Secretary-General

Pursuant to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 70/195 on combating sand and dust storms, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Assembly the global assessment of sand and dust storms, which can be consulted at: http://apps.unep.org/publications/index.php?option=com_pub&task=download&file=012125_en.

* A/71/150.

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Please recycle

United Nations A/71/377

General Assembly

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9 September 2016

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Seventy-first session
Item 74 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Oceans and the law of the sea: sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments

Letter dated 9 September 2016 from the moderator of the workshop to discuss the implementation of paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In my capacity as moderator of the workshop to discuss the implementation of paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, I have the honour to transmit a summary of the discussions held thereat (see annex).

In its resolution 69/109, the General Assembly recognized the value of preceding its further review of the actions taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in response to paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 with a two-day workshop. The workshop was held at Headquarters in New York on 1 and 2 August 2016, pursuant to paragraphs 162 and 163 of resolution 69/109 and paragraph 170 of resolution 70/75.

I kindly request that the present letter and the summary transmitted herewith be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 74 (b) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Osvaldo **Urrutia**
Moderator

* A/71/150.

16-15765 (E) 200916

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 9 September 2016 from the moderator of the workshop to discuss the implementation of paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Summary of the discussions held at the workshop*

1. Pursuant to paragraphs 162 and 163 of General Assembly resolution 69/109 and paragraph 170 of resolution 70/75, the workshop to discuss the implementation of paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, was held at Headquarters in New York on 1 and 2 August 2016.

2. The workshop was attended by representatives of States, intergovernmental organizations, including regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, and non-governmental organizations. Osvaldo Urrutia (Chile) was appointed moderator of the workshop.

3. In accordance with its agenda and organization of work,[a] the workshop consisted of five thematic segments, each of which was introduced by the presentations of relevant experts,[b] followed by a general discussion among participants. Summaries of each segment are presented in paragraphs 7 to 49 below.

4. Throughout the proceedings of the workshop, participants reiterated the importance of the work of the General Assembly in addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. They also noted the important role of States, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in that regard.

5. Participants welcomed the workshop as an important forum in which to exchange information and views on the actions that had been taken to implement the resolutions, as well as on areas that required further work.

6. Participants took stock of the considerable progress that had been made at the global, regional and national levels since the adoption of resolution 61/105. However, it was noted that implementation remained uneven and that further efforts to strengthen it were needed.

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* The summary is intended for reference purposes only and not as a record of the discussions.

[a] Available from www.un.org/depts/los/reference_files/Bottom_Fishing_Workshop_2016.pdf.

[b] The presentations of panellists are available from www.un.org/depts/los/reference_files/Bottom_Fishing_Workshop_2016_Presentations.pdf.

Impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks (segment 1)

7. In segment 1, presentations were made by Pablo Durán Muñoz (Spanish Institute of Oceanography, Spain), Odd Aksel Bergstad (Institute of Marine Research, Norway), Matthew Gianni (Deep Sea Conservation Coalition) and Alastair Macfarlane (International Coalition of Fisheries Associations).

8. Panellists highlighted the scope of the adverse impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, making reference also to the first global integrated marine assessment. The importance of deep-sea ecosystems and biodiversity was emphasized, as was the potential scope for damage to such ecosystems. It was noted that, besides bottom-trawling gear, it was now known that other types of gear could also have an impact on the bottom of the ocean and, therefore, have significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems. However, a panellist noted that a comprehensive evaluation of the scale of impacts on benthic ecosystems was not feasible owing to the relative lack of data. Some panellists also pointed out that the scale of bottom fishing was declining and remained small, compared with other fisheries. It was also noted that the number of flag States involved in bottom fishing was also small.

9. Attention was drawn to efforts being undertaken to enhance scientific knowledge and understanding through research programmes, while noting that further work was required to address remaining knowledge gaps, in particular with regard to conducting stock assessments and research on deep-sea fish stocks and vulnerable marine ecosystems. In that regard, it was also noted that more needed to be known about the status and characteristics of many deep-sea fish stocks. The need for an enhanced science-policy interface, including through the integration of the results of scientific research into management decisions of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, and the application of the precautionary approach, where knowledge was incomplete, was also highlighted. It was considered that greater focus should be placed on more research activities.

10. It was noted that, over the past 10 years, there had been significant progress in developing a regulatory framework for bottom-fishing activities on the high seas. Panellists highlighted the steps taken to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolutions and the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas, noting the considerable progress made. At the same time, unevenness in implementation and some specific areas where implementation still needed to make progress were underscored, including with regard to the assessments of cumulative impacts, seabed mapping, threshold-level determination, encounter protocols, footprint determination and an understanding of the nature of vulnerable marine ecosystems.

11. It was pointed out that, while there were still gaps in the coverage of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements for bottom fisheries, bottom fishing was not taking place in most areas lacking those organizations and arrangements competent to regulate such activities. Although the south-west Atlantic was provided as an example of an area where bottom fishing was taking place, notwithstanding a lack of coverage of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, some participants considered that the flag States of vessels fishing in the area had been taking the measures necessary to address the

impacts of fishing activities. Other participants noted the lack of effective action by some flag States.

12. It was noted that the putting in place of effective vulnerable marine ecosystem encounter protocols was also dependent on the availability of data. The view was expressed that a small number of encounters had been reported because of the relatively small scale of bottom fisheries. Another panellist expressed the view that the current threshold levels were too high to effectively protect vulnerable marine ecosystems. The need to cautiously evaluate the encounter thresholds and move-on rules of vulnerable marine ecosystems for each region was emphasized. It was further noted that independent scientific observers on board could improve reporting. Furthermore, it was stressed that, regardless of the implementation of the move-on rules, the impacts of bottom fisheries should be assessed.

13. It was noted that, while area-based management tools, including vulnerable marine ecosystem closures, were used in practice, the requirement for impact assessments had only been partially implemented.

14. Some participants stressed the importance of the full implementation of the provisions of existing General Assembly resolutions and international law. In that regard, a panellist expressed the view that the relevant resolutions did not articulate the adequate level of protection for vulnerable marine ecosystems.

15. A participant expressed a preference for annual reporting by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, rather than consideration of the issue of bottom fishing by the General Assembly, and others for the Assembly to retain a broader oversight role in that regard.

Progress made by States in addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, in particular through the implementation of the relevant paragraphs of resolutions 64/72 and 66/68 (segment 2)

16. In segment 2, presentations were made by Mindaugas Kisieliauskas (Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission); Jae-bong Lee (National Institute of Fisheries Science, Republic of Korea); Aurora Guerrero (Undersecretariat for Fisheries, Chile); and Kerrie Robertson (Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources).

17. Several States presented their experiences in implementing the relevant provisions of the General Assembly resolutions addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. In that regard, some participants highlighted the progress made at the national level since 2011 in the development of legislative and regulatory frameworks for bottom fishing, including in response to the provisions of the relevant resolutions. The measures described included requirements for fishing authorizations, capacity freezes, footprint restrictions, depth restrictions, gear restrictions, impact assessments, reporting and move-on rules, area closures, control measures, penalties, data collection, mapping and identification of vulnerable marine ecosystems, observer coverage, harvest control rules and bans on fishing in areas not covered by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements.

18. Information was also provided on how national legislation for areas within national jurisdiction reflected the provisions of relevant General Assembly resolutions. Examples in that regard included the application of the precautionary and ecosystem approaches, the definition of vulnerable marine ecosystems, the identification and prohibition of fishing on seamounts, the establishment of marine protected areas, observer programmes, gear restrictions, seafloor mapping programmes and the development of an ecological risk assessment framework.

19. The complexity of developing and implementing national legal frameworks was manifested in the various decisions and approaches highlighted by panellists. For example, the policy and scientific bases of restricting bottom fishing activities beginning at a depth of 800 m were debated. Discussions also focused on decisions on the geographical scope of national measures, which could overlap with measures put in place by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, thereby creating a potential lack of coherence among those measures.

20. Participants reported on their efforts to implement the measures taken by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements to address the impacts of bottom fishing.

21. Information was provided on voluntary and interim measures put in place by States until the adoption of measures by new regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements or pending the entry into force of their constitutive instruments. The need for all flag States fishing in areas not regulated by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements to undertake assessments and implement measures was highlighted. However, it was noted that the establishment of measures by flag States in relation to areas not currently regulated through regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements was a continuing process, to be further refined on the basis of the best scientific information available as the knowledge base was expanded. Hope was expressed that precautionary measures would be put in place soon for the Arctic Ocean.

22. The need for improved implementation by States and for the sharing of information on the measures taken to implement the General Assembly resolutions at the national level was noted. In particular, the need to establish effective threshold levels, scientific observer coverage and enforcement was indicated. The need for additional research on vulnerable marine ecosystems and deep-sea fish stocks, including mapping, was also emphasized.

Focus on the experience and the special requirements of developing States in addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, in particular through the implementation of the relevant paragraphs of resolutions 64/72 and 66/68 (segment 3)

23. In segment 3, presentations were made by Rankiri Pathirannahelage Prabath Krishantha Jayasinghe (National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency, Sri Lanka), Merete Tandstad (FAO) and Mario Gilberto Aguilar Sánchez (National Commission for Aquaculture and Fisheries, Mexico).

24. Attention was drawn to not only some of the progress made, but also the challenges faced by developing States in protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems

from the impacts of bottom fishing, including in areas within national jurisdiction. Panellists highlighted the importance of sustainable fisheries for nutrition, food security and sustainable development in developing countries, as well as the steps taken at the national level to develop bottom fisheries while protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. Measures taken included the imposition of gear restrictions, the establishment of protected areas and ecologically and biologically significant areas, capacity-control measures, data-collection measures, the management of shark fisheries, awareness-raising programmes, the application of the precautionary and ecosystem approaches and monitoring, control and surveillance mechanisms, including logbook reporting.

25. The need to enhance the capacity of developing States, including with regard to stock assessments, scientific and technical knowledge, financial resources, infrastructure and training, was underscored. The view was expressed that further efforts were also needed for the development of integrated management plans and data-sharing at the regional level. The difficulty of building buy-in from fishing communities in developing States was also noted. The challenges associated with maintaining sufficient levels of employment while achieving maximum sustainable yield in fisheries were further underscored.

26. The significant potential value of participation in deep-sea fisheries for developing States was highlighted. In that regard, a panellist highlighted some of the challenges that could arise when developing countries acquired capacity to participate in deep-sea fisheries. It was noted that integrating those new entrants would require changes to existing allocations of fishing opportunities, based on the principle of equity. At the same time, the maintenance of the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks and the protection of vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems also needed to be considered. Other challenges for developing States in relation to bottom fishing that were identified included the development of joint investigation programmes, the protection of areas important for biological connectivity and ensuring the implementation of regulations.

27. Information was provided on ongoing capacity-building and capacity-development programmes, including the FAO deep-seas fisheries programme, the Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, which was supported by the Global Environment Facility, and the EAF Nansen project. In that context, the challenges faced in various regions and by States with different capacities were noted, as were the opportunities for and potential benefits of cross-regional exchanges and information-sharing.

Progress made by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, in particular through the implementation of the relevant paragraphs of resolutions 64/72 and 66/68 (segment 4)

28. In segment 4, presentations were made by Miguel Bernal (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean), Ricardo Federizon (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization), Stefán Ásmundsson (North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission), Dae Yeon Moon (North Pacific Fisheries Commission), Ben van Zyl (South East

Atlantic Fisheries Organization) and Johanne Fischer (South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization).

29. Panellists described various actions taken at the regional level through regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements to implement the provisions of the General Assembly resolutions aimed at addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. Those included the establishment of the fishing footprint, exploratory fisheries protocols and impact assessments, the identification and closure of vulnerable marine ecosystems, the development of encounter protocols, fish stock assessments, compulsory observer coverage and the periodic review of adopted measures. The implementation of interim measures and voluntary measures in the context of newly established regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements was also highlighted. The development of a regional strategy for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by one regional fisheries management organization, which included the identification of vulnerable marine ecosystems, was noted. The practice of annual compliance reviews by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements was also highlighted.

30. The diversity of approaches among regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements was underscored, including in relation to the science-policy interface. It was noted that diverse approaches were also being used by States in one regional fisheries management organization in relation to encounter protocols.

31. Commonalities among the issues faced by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in implementing the resolutions identified by participants included the paucity of scientific information, difficulties in the collection and sharing of data and the challenges of ensuring an effective science-policy interface. The development of rules of procedure for the collection of data on catches and vulnerable marine ecosystems by on-board observers were highlighted as ways to address challenges in data collection. It was also noted that undertaking stock assessments could be challenging, given the limited knowledge of deep-sea species, in particular by-catch in mixed fisheries. Some participants underlined the need for collaboration among regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements and between scientists across regions. The ongoing dialogue between scientists and managers, as well as the need to enhance such dialogue, was emphasized.

32. It was noted that more research was needed with regard to the effectiveness of the closure of fisheries in improving ecosystem resilience.

33. The need to use the best scientific information available was stressed. It was pointed out that scientific advice was not always acted upon by regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements. In response to a question on the possible use of objection procedures by States to opt out of conservation and management measures aimed at regulating bottom fishing, a panellist indicated that there had been no objections to measures to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems in the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and that information on the use of the objection procedure in that organization had been made publicly available.

34. The importance of integrating scientific information into management measures so as to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems was highlighted.

35. Participants commended the good progress made in implementing the relevant General Assembly resolutions at the regional and national levels. A participant noted that the Preparatory Committee established under General Assembly resolution 69/292 on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction should be made aware of those achievements. Another participant stressed the need to initiate a discussion on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the context of the Committee.

36. The importance of sharing information and experiences among various regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, as well as their member States, was underlined. Existing mechanisms for cooperation and enhancing such cooperation were highlighted, including informal cooperation at the secretariat level through the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network and through participation in the Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction project, as well as formal bilateral cooperation among regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements or with other bodies through memorandums of understanding. It was pointed out that contracting parties also had a role to play in furthering cooperation. Other means of interaction included bilateral cooperation in stock assessment and capacity-building and the sharing of information through the vulnerable marine ecosystem database of FAO. The role of FAO in coordinating some of those efforts was noted.

37. A number of participants emphasized the need to focus on the implementation of the resolutions by all States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements. Some participants expressed the view that the full implementation of the resolutions would be sufficient to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of fisheries resources.

38. Some participants raised questions as to how the framework for implementing the General Assembly resolutions could be further strengthened in some regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, including by reviewing threshold levels, applying the precautionary approach and enforcing adopted measures. Challenges in integrating multi-species management were also highlighted. Furthermore, the need for technical assistance and capacity-building, for cases in which the capacities of States participating in a fishery differed, was underscored.

39. A participant said that it was important to encourage action at the global level, but emphasized that circumstances differed between regions. A number of participants considered that technical meetings, such as the workshop, were useful. At the same time, a participant considered the issue to be a technical matter and more appropriate to be reviewed by FAO.

40. It was noted that some bottom fishing occurred outside the established fishing footprint. In that regard, the secretariat of a regional fisheries management

organization indicated that it had been mandated to monitor the movement of fishing vessels to address the matter.

41. It was pointed out that human activities other than fisheries also affected marine ecosystems, and the need for action to address such impacts, in particular by conducting assessments of cumulative impacts, was noted. The importance of cooperation between regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements and regional seas programmes and action plans was underlined. In that regard, activities similar to the ongoing cooperation between the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic were suggested for other regions.

Opportunities for and challenges in further addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks (segment 5)

42. In segment 5, presentations were made by Duncan Currie (Pew Environment Group), Alastair Macfarlane (International Coalition of Fisheries Associations), Ellen Kenchington (Fisheries and Oceans Canada) and Merete Tandstad (FAO).

43. Panellists and other participants highlighted the progress made in the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly (see also paras. 10, 17, 18, 24, 29 and 33).

44. Nonetheless, the view was expressed that the implementation of the resolutions could still be significantly improved, in particular in some areas where less progress had been made. The need to strengthen the effectiveness of the measures in place on the basis of the best available scientific information available, improve such information and take a precautionary approach where such information was not available was emphasized. Attention was also drawn to the need to apply an ecosystem approach, conduct assessments of cumulative impacts, undertake multi-species management, which also addressed by-catch, and gain a broader understanding of what constituted a vulnerable marine ecosystem. In addition, specific recommendations for improving implementation were highlighted, including improving assessments, closing vulnerable marine ecosystems to fishing unless environmental impact assessments were performed, performing assessments on slope sediment ecosystems, utilizing the full criteria in the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas to define vulnerable marine ecosystems, allowing vulnerable marine ecosystems to recover, not authorizing fishing activities until measures were put in place and establishing mandates for regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements to protect biodiversity, including in cooperation with regional seas organizations. It was stated that further understanding was needed of the ecological role of vulnerable marine ecosystems and ecosystem services provided by such ecosystems and species, as well as the timeline for the recovery of those ecosystems. It was noted that the resumed Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and the Committee on Fisheries of FAO had also considered the progress made in the implementation of

the General Assembly resolutions relating to bottom fishing and adopted recommendations in this regard.

45. Another view was expressed that the adverse impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems were more limited than previously thought and that it would be possible to institute measures to regulate such fishing while maintaining an acceptable level of impact. In that context, it was considered that more technical work was needed to refine the measures currently in place, as scientific understanding improved. In that regard, a view was expressed that the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas could be reviewed to take into account experiences regarding the spatial dimensions of impacts and further refine the concept of significant adverse impacts. Another participant cautioned against reopening the Guidelines. Some participants noted that adverse impacts from bottom fishing might be underreported owing to the lack of scientific understanding of deep-sea ecosystems and species and their interdependences. It was also noted that the recovery time for stocks and ecosystems had to be considered.

46. The difficulties of assessing significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems in the light of the lack of sufficient scientific knowledge of such ecosystems and the species that inhabit them and the need for further research were underscored. It was noted that research, for example, had already helped to understand the valuable role played by sponge fields in fostering biodiversity in benthic habitats. The limitations of predictive analysis and the length of time needed to validate scientific research were highlighted as some of the challenges to be addressed.

47. With regard to strengthening the role of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, it was noted that, while regional differences necessitated tailored approaches, various FAO forums and projects provided avenues for the exchange of information and experiences between regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements and other relevant stakeholders. Information was also provided on ongoing initiatives at FAO to further technical work on the implementation of the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas and the General Assembly resolutions, including cooperative initiatives.

48. Many participants drew attention to the important role played by the General Assembly in the progress made to date and expressed the view that there was an ongoing need for the Assembly to review implementation on a regular basis, emphasizing the need for continued and improved reporting in this regard. Other participants expressed the view that further work should be technical in nature and focused on the regional level. According to that view, the Assembly had succeeded in filling the regulatory gap that it had sought to address and could now leave it to other entities to fine-tune the regulatory framework that it had established.

49. Many participants noted the usefulness of the workshop and similar forums for the exchange of views and information among stakeholders. In addition, it was considered useful to have such an exchange with national fisheries managers.

Summary segment

50. During the summary segment, the moderator provided an oral summary of the principal elements of the discussion and indicated that he would prepare the present written summary for circulation as a document of the General Assembly on that basis.

51. Participants expressed their gratitude to the moderator and to the panellists for the high quality of their presentations. Appreciation was also expressed to the Secretariat, in particular to the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, of the Office of Legal Affairs, for the high standard of secretariat services and assistance provided during the planning and organization of the workshop.

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Strengthening of the United Nations system: central role of the United Nations system in global governance

The United Nations in global economic governance

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/289, elaborates on the adoption, in 2015, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change as a major step forward in enhancing the role of the United Nations in global economic governance. These universal agreements establish overarching global frameworks for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by all Member States, while taking into account their different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and addressing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The report describes the substantial efforts of the United Nations system, major country groupings and international financial and trade institutions to align their programmes of work with these United Nations-led outcomes.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 67/289, entitled "The United Nations in global economic governance", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventy-first session a report on the implementation of that resolution, exploring options and ideas for continuing interaction between the United Nations and intergovernmental groupings, to be prepared in consultation with Member States and relevant organizations of the United Nations system, taking into account the post-2015 development agenda and the follow-up processes to all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

2. The report follows up on the two previous reports of the Secretary-General on global economic governance and development (A/66/506 and A/67/769), issued in October 2011 and March 2013.[1] The adoption, in 2015, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change marks a major step forward in enhancing the role of the United Nations in global economic governance. What has followed is a major shift within the United Nations system and beyond, including among major country groupings and international financial and trade institutions, towards the alignment of their work with these United Nations-led outcomes. An update to the 2011 and 2013 reports on global economic governance and development is therefore timely and warranted. A note verbale was circulated to all Member States seeking their views on the issue of the United Nations in global economic governance and consultations were undertaken with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system. The responses received from Member States are available on a dedicated website.[2]

II. Overview of the world economic situation and prospects

3. Although the global economic recovery is progressing, downside risks remain. In 2015, global growth stumbled amid weak aggregate demand, sluggish trade and investment, falling commodity prices and increasing financial market volatility in major economies. Economic activity remains lacklustre, with little prospect for a turnaround in 2016. Gross world product is projected to expand by only 2.4 per cent in 2016, the same weak rate as in 2015. Growth prospects for 2017 also remain well below pre-crisis trends.[3]

4. The current global economic situation is not favourable for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Weak global growth is likely to undermine public and private investment in education, health, infrastructure, environmental protection and progress in poverty reduction. If the current growth pattern continues in the longer

[1] Consistent with previous reports of the Secretary-General on this issue, the term "global economic governance" refers to the role of multilateral institutions and processes in shaping global economic policies, rules and regulations.

[2] See www.un.org/esa/ffd/topics/global-economic-governance/geg-71ga.html.

[3] United Nations, "World economic situation and prospects: update as of mid-2016" (New York, 2016), p. i. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_current/2016wesp_update.pdf.

term, gross domestic product growth in the least developed countries will fall well short of the 7 per cent target set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Against this backdrop, the international community needs to renew its efforts to improve policy coordination at the national, regional and international levels. Stimulating inclusive growth in the short term and fostering long-term sustainable development will require more effective coordination of monetary, exchange rate and fiscal policies to break the vicious cycle of weak aggregate demand, underinvestment, low productivity and low growth performance in the global economy. Furthermore, economic, social and environmental policies need to be integrated into structural reforms to realize the comprehensive and universal 2030 Agenda. There also needs to be stronger international coordination of national policies to avoid adverse spillover effects on the global economy.

III. Strengthening the role of the United Nations in global economic governance

6. The year 2015 was momentous for multilateralism and international policy-shaping. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement, representing shared commitments at the highest political level, established the overarching global frameworks for achieving sustainable development by 2030 and beyond.

7. The primary role of the United Nations in spearheading global efforts to achieve sustainable development was not only formally stated, but also embodied in a lasting process of United Nations-led collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, including major country groupings and international financial institutions. In an unprecedented development, these stakeholders are now aligning their work with these United Nations-led outcomes.

8. The 2030 Agenda stands out for its universality, people-centred orientation and respect for human dignity and the planet. It provides an ambitious, shared vision that guides global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides a foundation to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and establishes a new global framework for financing sustainable development. The Paris Agreement charts a new course in the global effort aimed at fostering a rapid transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

9. These three outcomes spell out clear monitoring and follow-up mechanisms that offer new opportunities for the United Nations to continue to play a stronger role in global economic governance. The high-level political forum on sustainable development has a central function in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes of all relevant United Nations conferences at the global level. As mandated by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up provides a dedicated intergovernmental space at the United Nations to review the implementation of the financing for development outcomes and the delivery of the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Paris Agreement established a "global stocktake", the objective of which is to have the Parties to the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change update and enhance their actions and to support and increase international cooperation.

10. Effective global economic governance is crucial for the success of national efforts aimed at achieving sustainable development in all countries. The 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda attach great importance to strengthening international economic governance. In the 2030 Agenda, the international community recommitted itself to broadening the participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Member States pledged to take measures to improve and enhance global economic governance and to arrive at a stronger, more coherent, more inclusive and representative international architecture for sustainable development.

A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Salient features

11. In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The 2030 Agenda sets forth "a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" and seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. It consists of a declaration, 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, a section on its means of implementation and a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, and a framework for review and follow-up.

12. The 2030 Agenda envisages a world of universal respect for human rights, equality and non-discrimination. Its overriding message is to leave no one behind. The Sustainable Development Goals are integrated and indivisible and unite the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. They are universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. The means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda are woven into specific targets supporting the achievement of the Goals. In particular, Goal 17 strengthens the means of implementation and revitalizes the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, anchored on specific targets and actions with regard to finance, technology, trade and capacity-building.

2. Sustainable Development Goal indicators

13. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States decided that the Sustainable Development Goals and targets would be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators, complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels. The global indicator framework was to be simple yet robust, address all the Goals, targets and the means of implementation, and preserve the political balance, integration and ambition contained therein. Furthermore, Member States agreed that follow-up and review at the high-level political forum would be informed by an annual progress report on the Goals to be prepared by the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the United Nations system, based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level.

14. The Statistical Commission led a major effort to develop a set of indicators to measure the progress made in achieving the targets of the Goals. In March 2016, the Commission agreed to a proposal by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on the development of a global indicator framework. The Commission also decided that all estimates used for the compilation of global indicators for the Goals would be produced in full consultation with national statistical offices.

15. Based on the proposed global indicator framework, the Secretary-General issued, in June 2016, a report on progress towards the Goals (E/2016/75), followed by a publication entitled *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*,[4] which presented an overview of where the world stood relative to the Goals.

3. Follow-up process

High-level political forum on sustainable development

16. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed themselves to engaging in the systematic follow-up to and review of its implementation over the coming 15 years. The high-level political forum was assigned a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in accordance with existing mandates. Meeting every four years under the auspices of the Assembly, the forum provides high-level political guidance on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, identifies progress and emerging challenges and mobilizes further action to accelerate its implementation. It promotes system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies. The forum is also mandated to ensure effective linkages with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes.

17. Regular voluntary, State-led reviews by developed and developing countries, which provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders, are carried out at the annual high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. Member States decided that thematic reviews of progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, should be done by the forum. These reviews are to be supported by reviews by the functional commissions of the Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, which should reflect the integrated nature of the Goals and the linkages between them.

18. The high-level political forum benefits from input from other forums, such as the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and the Development Cooperation Forum. Deliberations at the high-level political forum are informed by an annual progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals and the "Global Sustainable Development Report".

19. Further modalities of the high-level political forum are spelled out in General Assembly resolution 70/299, entitled "Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for

[4] Available from http://unstats.un.org/sdg...report/2016/.

Sustainable Development at the global level". The sequence of themes for each four-year cycle of the forum is to reflect the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and the three dimensions of sustainable development, including cross-cutting and new and emerging issues, and will serve as the framework for reviewing all 17 Goals. Furthermore, a set of goals representing the three dimensions of sustainable development with a view to facilitating an in-depth review of progress made on all Goals over the course of a four-year cycle, with the means of implementation, including with respect to Goal 17, reviewed annually, will be discussed at the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

20. The first high-level political forum after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda was held from 11 to 20 July 2016 under the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind". Its central feature was voluntary national reviews delivered by 22 countries, which demonstrated how the implementation of the universal agenda was challenging for all Member States. The forum adopted a ministerial declaration (E/HLS/2016/1) as its outcome.

Multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

21. The Technology Facilitation Mechanism, established in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, was launched at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. The Mechanism comprises three elements: an inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, which met for the first time in March 2016, with a supporting group of 10 eminent representatives from civil society, the private sector and the scientific community; an online platform that will provide an overview of science, technology and innovation initiatives and promote the matching of technology supply and demand; and a multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Goals.

22. The multi-stakeholder forum is convened annually to discuss cooperation on science, technology and innovation around thematic areas for the implementation of the Goals. Its meetings are convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council before the meetings of the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the Council or, alternatively, in conjunction with other forums or conferences. The multi-stakeholder forum is co-chaired by representatives of two Member States who prepare a summary of the discussions as an input to the high-level political forum.

23. The multi-stakeholder forum provides a venue for facilitating interaction, partnerships and the establishment of networks among relevant stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to identify and examine technology needs and gaps, including with regard to scientific cooperation, innovation and capacity-building, and to help to facilitate the transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

24. The first multi-stakeholder forum was held at Headquarters in New York on 6 and 7 June 2016 and addressed the topic of realizing the potential of science, technology and innovation for all to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants discussed the mobilization of science, technology and innovation on behalf of the Goals and options for strengthening science, technology and

innovation capacity and literacy. They also emphasized that the forum could become a platform at the global level for the forum community and that its wide range of stakeholders would facilitate the creation of the conditions for transformative and solutions-oriented forums by fostering international coordination and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The summary of the forum by the Co-Chairs (E/HLPF/2016/6) was transmitted to the high-level political forum.

Global Sustainable Development Report

25. The 2030 Agenda provides that, in addition to the progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals, the high-level political forum should be informed by the Global Sustainable Development Report, which is to strengthen the science-policy interface and provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development. Following consultations led by the President of the Economic and Social Council on the scope, methodology and frequency of the Report, as well as its relation to the progress report, it was agreed that the Report should provide guidance on the state of global sustainable development from a scientific perspective, which would help to address the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, present lessons learned while focusing on challenges, address new and emerging issues and highlight emerging trends and actions. The Report should also focus on an integrated approach and examine policy options in the light of the need to sustain the balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development.

26. In addition, it was decided that the Report would be produced every four years to inform the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. Member States designed a three-tier mechanism for the preparation of the Report, including an independent group of scientists, comprising 15 eminent expert scientists appointed by the Secretary-General in consultation with Member States, to write the report, supported by a task team co-led by several entities of the United Nations system and by the scientific community.

B. Addis Ababa Action Agenda

1. Salient features

27. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides a strong foundation to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It includes a new global framework for financing sustainable development by aligning all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities. The financing needs for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals are truly immense. Nevertheless, they can be met, provided that financial systems are better aligned with sustainable development objectives. The Action Agenda laid the foundation for such alignment by bringing together, under United Nations leadership, all relevant stakeholders.

28. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda includes agreements and policy recommendations in seven main areas: national public resources, national and international private business and finance, international development cooperation, international trade as an engine for development, debt sustainability, addressing systemic issues and science, technology, innovation and capacity-building. The concluding section deals with data, monitoring and follow-up. The Action Agenda also serves as a guide for further actions by Governments, international

organizations, civil society, the business sector and philanthropic organizations. Such deliverables and initiatives will further contribute to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Together, these efforts support a revitalized and strengthened global partnership for sustainable development that can end extreme poverty and deliver sustainable development for all.

2. Follow-up process

Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up

29. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda established the annual Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up with universal, intergovernmental participation. The forum is mandated to assess progress, identify obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the financing for development outcomes and the delivery of the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, promote the sharing of lessons learned from experiences at the national and regional levels, address new and emerging topics of relevance and provide policy recommendations for action by the international community. The annual report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, convened by the Secretary-General, provides a major substantive input to the deliberations of the forum. Agreed-upon conclusions and recommendations at the intergovernmental level emerge from the forum as an input to the high-level political forum.

30. The inaugural forum on financing for development follow-up was held at Headquarters in New York from 18 to 20 April 2016, under the overall theme "Financing for sustainable development: follow-up to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda". The forum incorporated the special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), including an interactive dialogue with the representatives of intergovernmental bodies and the senior management of those institutions. The forum provided a solid platform for substantive deliberations on the entire scope of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as described in the summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council (A/71/88-E/2016/68) and a more extensive publication.[5]

31. The forum on financing for development follow-up resulted in a concise, forward-looking outcome document that reaffirmed the strong commitment to the full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, built on the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, and recognized the close link between the Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. The three-pronged approach of the 2016 Inter-Agency Task Force report setting the monitoring framework for future reports was welcomed, while the forum provided guidance for the preparation of its future sessions.

Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development

32. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Secretary-General was encouraged to convene an inter-agency task force on financing for development to report annually

[5] Available from www.un.org/esa/ffd/publications/ffd_forum_publication_2016.html.

on the progress made in implementing the financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was also to advise the intergovernmental follow-up on progress, implementation gaps and recommendations for corrective action. The primary role of its report was to inform the deliberations of Member States on the implementation of the financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the forum on financing for development follow-up and at the high-level political forum.

33. The Task Force comprises more than 50 United Nations agencies, programmes and other international institutions. The main institutional stakeholders of the financing for development process, namely, the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), WTO, UNCTAD and the United Nations Development Programme, play a central role, jointly with the Financing for Development Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which also serves as the coordinator and substantive editor of the Task Force's report. The regional commissions help to bring national and regional perspectives to the report. The report would also benefit from the input of other stakeholders, including academic institutions, civil society, foundations and the private sector.

34. The inaugural report of the Task Force presents the monitoring framework for the means of implementation targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. It also outlines the full set of data sources for annual assessments of the progress made in implementation, evidence-based policy analysis and recommendations for action. Future reports will follow a three-pronged approach, including discussion of the global context and its implications for financing for development follow-up, an overview of each chapter of the Action Agenda, with more detailed reporting contained in an online annex, and analyses of thematic issues. The reports will draw upon the Goal indicators, while also providing contextual analysis on the means of implementation and addressing progress on the additional commitments in the Action Agenda.

Global Infrastructure Forum

35. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda called for the establishment of a global infrastructure forum building on existing multilateral collaboration mechanisms, led by the multilateral development banks. The resulting Global Infrastructure Forum is intended to improve alignment and coordination among established and new infrastructure initiatives, multilateral and national development banks, United Nations agencies, national institutions, development partners and the private sector. It will encourage a wider range of voices to be heard, in particular from developing countries, in order to identify and address infrastructure and capacity gaps, especially in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries. It will highlight opportunities for investment and cooperation and work to ensure that investments are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

36. The first Global Infrastructure Forum was held in Washington, D.C., on 16 April 2016. It was co-hosted by the World Bank Group and other multilateral development banks,[6] in cooperation with United Nations agencies and development

[6] African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank and New Development Bank.

partners. The hallmark of the Forum was its inclusiveness. For the first time, it brought together all the heads of the multilateral development banks, including the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, and the United Nations, represented by the Secretary-General. Major country groupings, such as the Group of 77 and China, the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four on International Monetary Affairs and Development and the Group of 20, were also represented. The presence of those institutions demonstrated their commitment to strengthening collaboration to bridge the infrastructure gap.

37. The Forum's outcome was a statement by its Chair.[7] Multilateral development banks and development partners committed themselves to working with countries and investors to support the provision of greater access to, and better quality of, affordable and sustainable infrastructure services. The Forum will be held annually to review progress. The responsibility for hosting it will rotate among the multilateral development banks and preparations for it will continue to be carried out in an inclusive manner, in cooperation with the United Nations system through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Its outcomes will be reported to the United Nations through the forum on financing for development follow-up.

C. Paris Agreement

38. At its twenty-first session, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reached a landmark agreement to combat climate change and accelerate and intensify the action and investments needed for a sustainable low-carbon future. The Paris Agreement unites all nations in a common cause to take ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to developing countries in that regard. As such, it charts a new course in the global climate effort.

39. The central aim of the Paris Agreement is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise in the twenty-first century below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. The Agreement also aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate financial flows, new technologies and an enhanced capacity-building framework will be put in place, thereby supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives.

40. The Paris Agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through nationally determined contributions, including regular reports on their greenhouse gas emissions and implementation efforts. There will also be a global stocktake every five years to assess the collective progress made and to inform further individual actions by Parties.

41. The Paris Agreement will enter into force 30 days after at least 55 Parties to the Convention, accounting for an estimated 55 per cent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions, have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with the Secretary-General. As at 7 September

[7] Available from www.worldbank.org/en/topic/publicprivatepartnerships/brief/chairmans-statement-global-infrastructure-forum-2016.

2016, 27 States, accounting for 39.08 per cent of global emissions, had submitted such instruments. The rapid entry into force of the Agreement will create incentives for the early implementation of nationally determined contributions and build support within markets and societies for the increased climate ambition.

IV. Role of the Economic and Social Council in global economic governance

42. There is a distinct and special role for the Economic and Social Council in global economic governance. As one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the Council is mandated to offer direction to and provide coordination of the economic, social, cultural and related activities of the Organization.

A. Economic and Social Council reform

43. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/1, launched the most far-reaching reform of the Council in more than a decade. The reform is aimed at making the Council a leadership forum for policy dialogue and recommendations, the lead entity to address new and emerging challenges, a key body for a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, a central mechanism for guidance to and coordination of the United Nations development system and an accountability platform for universal commitments, monitoring and reporting on progress at all levels.

44. The support of the Council for the 2030 Agenda is broad. It includes advancing a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through its annual main theme and addressing specific areas and issues, including humanitarian affairs and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Doing so involves the Council's system as a whole and includes development stakeholders and actors. The strengthening of the Council, with its segments, forums and instruments, along with its functional commissions and expert bodies, also created the architecture to support the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, in particular by launching the high-level political forum, the forum on financing for development follow-up and the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

45. The General Assembly decided that the Council should adopt an annual main theme that would serve to guide the Council and its entire system. The various parts of the Council contribute to a global review, such as the Council's operational activities and integration segments, as well as various forums. Each part of the Council system aligns, to the extent possible, its work to the main theme, bringing the work of the system closer together and offering an integrated perspective on sustainable development.

46. The work of the Council during its annual cycle, including that of its functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies, culminates in the high-level segment, which contains policy discussions and forums and has broad responsibilities and political significance for global dialogue on sustainable development. The annual ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum is

placed within the high-level segment so that it can draw upon the Council's work during this annual cycle, including that of the Council system.

47. Overall, 30 United Nations bodies have a direct reporting relationship to the Council: 9 functional commissions, 5 regional commissions, 3 standing committees, 1 ad hoc body, 8 expert bodies and 4 related bodies. The Council also plays an important role in reviewing the work of another 14 standing bodies that report formally to the General Assembly.

48. In addition, the Council has created new multi-stakeholder platforms and strengthened existing forums to tackle emerging global challenges, such as its youth forum and its partnership forum. Through special meetings on emergency situations and topical issues, including, most recently, on inequality, El Niño and the Zika and Ebola viruses, the Council helped to raise awareness and serve as a high-level policy platform for the coordination of efforts of relevant actors and to develop a strategic global response.

B. Development Cooperation Forum

49. The biennial Development Cooperation Forum, established in 2005, has a mandate to review trends and progress in international development cooperation (General Assembly resolution 61/16, para. 4 (a)). Within the United Nations system, the Forum is the focal point for the holistic consideration of issues relating to international development cooperation, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders (resolution 63/239, annex, para. 47). The deliberations of the Forum, according to its mandate, will be taken into account by the forum on financing for development follow-up (resolution 69/313, annex, para. 132). The high-level political forum, which meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, also takes into account the work of the Forum (see resolution 67/290).

50. Currently, the Forum focuses on contributing to the development cooperation aspects of the 2030 Agenda. It benefits from analytical studies on key issues, such as the future role of development cooperation, South-South cooperation and knowledge-sharing and mutual learning through monitoring, review and accountability. The Forum is informed by high-level preparatory events, which are organized to generate substantive input and gather the views of policymakers and practitioners.

51. The most recent Forum was held at Headquarters in New York on 21 and 22 July 2016 and demonstrated its role as a vital platform to review trends and progress made in international development cooperation and its contributions to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

C. Longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system

52. In its resolution 2014/14, the Economic and Social Council decided to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system, taking into account the post-2015 development agenda, including the interlinkages between the alignment of functions, funding practices, governance structures, capacity and impact of the United Nations

development system, partnership approaches and organizational arrangements. The dialogue took place over 18 months, ending in July 2016, and was aimed at reorienting the United Nations development system to better respond to the needs and priorities of a new development era.

53. The dialogue benefited from a number of analytical contributions from Member States, the United Nations development system, independent experts and an independent team of advisers appointed by the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council. The independent team of advisers provided a set of concrete, bold and ambitious proposals with a vision of a stronger system working as one. It pushed for breaking silos and achieving horizontal coherence, focusing on the importance of leadership at the global and country levels, one governing board, one global framework and one way of operating by reorganizing presence in the field based on entities' comparative advantage.

54. The independent team of advisers made four recommendations to improve the governance of the United Nations development system: strengthen the monitoring and oversight role of the Economic and Social Council by establishing the position of a full-time President with adequate staff support, establish a sustainable development board through the gradual merging of governing bodies, improve the scope and effectiveness of the resolution of the General Assembly on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and enhance the quality of decision-making by individual governing bodies by reviewing their composition and working methods. The outcome of the dialogue will feed into the quadrennial comprehensive policy review at the seventy-first session of the Assembly.

V. Engagement of the United Nations with intergovernmental groupings

A. Group of 20

55. The Group of 20, comprising 19 countries[8] and the European Union, was founded in 1999 as a forum of central bank governors and finance ministers with the aim of promoting international financial stability. Its members account for 90 per cent of global gross domestic product, and almost 70 per cent of the world's population and 94 per cent of official development assistance. In response to the financial crisis of 2008, the Group was elevated to a summit of leaders. At the summit held in Pittsburgh, United States of America, in 2009, the Group was designated the premier forum for international economic cooperation among its members.[9]

56. Since the Group was established as a leaders-level forum, it has played a critical role in providing political impetus for international economic cooperation among its members and engaging major emerging economies in international decision-making. Its coordinated efforts helped to stabilize the world economy at

[8] Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

[9] See www.g20.org/English/aboutg20/AboutG20/201511/t20151127_1609.html.

the height of the global financial crisis. It has also been driving post-crisis efforts to recast the formal structure of economic governance. Most notably, the Group agreed to set up a financial stability board in 2009 to take forward the coordination of financial sector regulatory reform. At its summit in 2010, it put forward a proposal on governance reforms at the World Bank Group and IMF,[10] contributing to the eventual agreements reached by all World Bank and IMF member countries.

57. The development agenda of the Group was launched in its Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth, in which the Group called for strengthening support for the most vulnerable, including fulfilling pledges of official development assistance, and featured core development issues, such as job creation, climate change and food security. The development focus of its work has been institutionalized since 2010, when, at its summit held in Toronto, Canada, it established a development working group.[11] In November 2010, the Group of 20 leaders adopted the Seoul Development Consensus for Shared Growth, which was accompanied by the multi-year action plan on development.

58. Given the prominence of the Group in the global economy, the United Nations recognized early on the importance of effectively engaging the Group in its global sustainable development work. To that end, the United Nations, represented by the Secretary-General, has participated in all the Group's summits since 2008. The United Nations has consistently focused on encouraging the Group to place greater attention on global development challenges. It has also strongly advocated forward-looking policies and approaches towards sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth. The enhanced interaction between the United Nations and the Group brought about a continued strengthening of the development focus of the work of the Group under different presidencies. Through the Group, the United Nations has mobilized political support for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

59. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Group has demonstrated a commitment to their implementation. At the summit held in Antalya, Turkey, in 2015, the Group recognized that the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda set a transformative, universal and ambitious framework for global development efforts. It adopted a Group of 20 and low-income developing countries framework and decided to develop an action plan in 2016 to further align the work of the Group with the 2030 Agenda.

60. Under the current presidency (China), the Group made a major breakthrough in strengthening its contribution to development. The theme of its most recent summit, held in Hangzhou, China, on 4 and 5 September 2016, was "Towards an innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy" to mark its transition from a crisis-response mechanism to a group with a longer-term sustainable development approach. In that regard, the Chinese presidency has identified four key priorities: breaking a new path for growth, more effective and efficient global economic and financial governance, robust international trade and investment and inclusive and interconnected development.

61. The highlight of the summit was the prioritization of sustainable development in the macro policy framework of the Group. The summit's communiqué (A/71/380)

[10] See www.g20.utoronto.ca/2010/to-communique.html.
[11] See www.g20dwg.org/.

strongly aligns with the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. One of the 10 key deliverables of the summit is the Group's action plan on the 2030 Agenda, which signifies its effort to further align its work with the new United Nations development agenda and become a driving force for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

62. The action plan includes high-level implementation principles and collective and national actions by member countries. Collective actions are framed around key development areas, such as infrastructure, food security, employment, industrialization, inclusive business, energy, trade and investment, anti-corruption, international financial architecture, growth strategies, climate finance, innovation, global health and coordination. It has a time frame for achievement of 15 years, in line with the 2030 Agenda. The members of the Group commit themselves to be held accountable for their collective actions in relation to the 2030 Agenda through established accountability processes in the Group's various work streams.

63. In addition, there are several deliverables under each priority area. For example, the Group's blueprint on innovative growth establishes a series of concrete action plans in areas such as innovation, a new industrial revolution and the digital economy. Its initiative on supporting industrialization in Africa and the least developed countries, to be implemented with the substantive and operational support of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, is aimed at promoting job creation, sustainable livelihoods, technology and skills development, food security and equitable growth in the most vulnerable countries. A call for all members of the Group to accelerate their ratification of the Paris Agreement in order to bring it into force at an early date makes a meaningful contribution to international cooperation on climate change.

64. Over the years, efforts have been made to strengthen the representation of developing countries in the Group of 20. For the first time, Thailand, the current Chair of the Group of 77, was invited to the 2016 summit in recognition of the Group's leadership role at the United Nations. Developing countries were also represented by the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Chad, as Chair of the African Union, and Senegal, as Chair of the Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. In preparation for the Summit, the Chinese presidency reached out to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. In addition, business, labour, think tank, youth, women and civil society meetings were held in order to build the widest possible support and consensus.

65. Furthermore, there has been increasing cooperation between the United Nations and international financial institutions in jointly supporting the work of the Group of 20. Leaders of the Group have called upon the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to develop an inclusive framework for the implementation of the base erosion and profit-shifting project globally. In that regard, IMF, OECD, the United Nations and the World Bank have established a platform for collaboration on tax, which will produce, as a major collective output, a number of toolkits and reports aimed at translating the complexity of base erosion and profit-shifting outcomes into user-friendly guidance for developing countries.

B. Group of 77 and China

66. The Group of 77 and China plays a key role in addressing system-wide policy and development issues at the United Nations. The leadership provided by the Group has been demonstrated on numerous occasions, including during the summit held in 2014 to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. The summit's outcome document (A/68/948, annex) contains a chapter on global challenges, including global economic governance. The Group called for a renewed commitment to the global partnership for development, which would include the issues of providing financial resources to developing countries, official developing assistance, debt relief and debt restructuring, trade, technology transfer and the greater participation of developing countries in global economic governance.

67. According to the Group, strengthening the United Nations and its role in international cooperation for development is essential to responding to current and future challenges and opportunities emanating from the process of globalization. In that regard, the Group advocated exploring the establishment of a United Nations intergovernmental mechanism under the General Assembly with the responsibility for monitoring the performance of the global economic and financial system in a comprehensive and sustainable manner to prevent the spread of economic and financial crises among countries.

68. The Group actively participated in the processes leading to the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Given that the implementation phase has begun, the involvement of the Group and the ability of its members to engage in effective follow-up and monitoring will be essential.

C. European Union

69. While the European Union believes that the current global economic governance architecture strikes the right balance between legitimacy and effectiveness, it considers that, in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement, it is time to look forward to new synergies and discourse among the various relevant actors for stronger global economic governance. The European Union has been a firm promoter of effective multilateralism and a supporter of the fundamental role of the United Nations system in global governance. As stated in its global strategy,[12] issued in June 2016, the European Union will strive for a strong United Nations as the bedrock of the multilateral, rules-based order and develop globally coordinated responses with international and regional organizations, States and non-State actors.

70. The European Union considers policy coherence to be a central component of the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Their comprehensive approach requires that policy areas be aligned in order to advance their implementation and to avoid activities counterproductive to their objectives. The United Nations development system needs to work in a more integrated fashion, with strengthened inter-agency work, and delivering as one.

71. The European Union has already taken important steps to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. In particular, it decided to place greater

[12] Available from https://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

emphasis on national resource mobilization and management, double its support in this area, launch an external investment plan for facilitating investment in partner countries and further expand blended financing, in cooperation with the private sector and relevant finance institutions.

72. Later in 2016, the European Commission will put forward an overarching initiative mapping out how the European Union will contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through internal and external action. A proposal for a new European consensus on development will also be presented, outlining how the European Union and its member States can respond to global challenges and the 2030 Agenda.

D. Global Governance Group

73. The Global Governance Group, an informal coalition of 30 States Members of the United Nations, was established in 2010 to present views of States that are not members of the Group of 20 on major global issues. Members of the Global Governance Group believe that the United Nations, the only global body with universal participation and unquestioned legitimacy, should play a prominent institutionalized role in the deliberations of the Group of 20.

74. The Global Governance Group provides input on selected matters in global economic governance to the Group of 20 at its summits and informs the Secretary-General of its submissions. In its input for 2016 (A/71/221, annex), it focused on infrastructure for enhanced connectivity and growth and on innovation-driven growth, stressing the essential linkages of those areas with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda and supporting the relevant agenda of the Group of 20.

VI. Response of international financial and trade institutions to the 2030 Agenda

A. International Monetary Fund

75. IMF is strongly committed, within its mandate, to the global partnership for sustainable development. It has recently expanded access to its concessional resources for eligible developing countries, while maintaining the self-sustaining nature of its concessional lending facility. In July 2015, it adopted a 50 per cent increase in access to all its concessional lending facilities for low-income countries and a zero interest rate on IMF lending to low-income countries affected by natural disasters or conflicts under its Rapid Credit Facility.

76. In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, IMF is expanding its macroeconomic policy advice and technical assistance to help countries to tackle infrastructure gaps without endangering public debt sustainability. Furthermore, it is striving to strengthen the effectiveness of its policy work with fragile and conflict-affected States. It will also enhance its support for developing countries in building capacity in tax policy and administration by deepening the dialogue on international tax issues and developing improved diagnostic tools to help member countries to strengthen their tax systems.

77. In an important development, the IMF quota and governance reforms, agreed to in 2010, became effective in January 2016. They deliver a 100 per cent increase in total quotas and a realignment of quota shares that better reflect the changing relative weights of the IMF member countries in the global economy. They will also result in a shift of more than 6 per cent of quota shares from overrepresented to underrepresented member countries, (i.e., dynamic emerging market and developing countries). Another round of reforms has been targeted for agreement before the annual meetings of IMF and the World Bank in 2017.

78. With regard to special drawing rights, the latest review of the method of valuation of the special drawing rights basket was completed on 30 November 2015. The IMF Executive Board decided that, as from 1 October 2016, the Chinese renminbi would be included in the basket as a fifth currency, along with the United States dollar, the euro, the Japanese yen and the British pound sterling. This is the first time in more than 15 years that the list of currencies comprising the special drawing rights has been altered.

B. World Bank Group

79. The World Bank Group continues to make efforts to enhance its support for sustainable development. In 2013, it articulated twin goals to reduce global extreme poverty to 3 per cent by 2030 and to boost shared prosperity for the bottom 40 per cent of the population in each country, marking the first time that the Group set a target for reducing income inequality, which is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

80. The World Bank Group has reorganized itself in order to better deliver on its twin goals. Its new operating model, launched in July 2014, stems directly from this commitment. Country-based teams remain the chief interface with clients and are responsible for country and regional strategies. To support the country-based programmes and marshal the best development knowledge available, the Group created global practices and cross-cutting solutions areas. Global practices are aimed at providing integrated, evidence-based solutions to help clients to address their most complex challenges. Cross-cutting solutions areas focus the Group's resources on corporate priorities. A review of the new organizational structure of the World Bank shows that there is at least one global practice group or cross-cutting solution area that is related directly to each of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the Goals on growth and Goal 17 are associated with more than two global practices, suggesting a strong degree of alignment between the Group and the 2030 Agenda.

81. Boosting the national resource mobilization capacity of developing countries has been one of the key priorities of the World Bank Group. Together with IMF, the Group launched a joint initiative to help developing countries to strengthen their tax systems. The Group is also actively engaged in public finance management and supporting efforts to halt the flow of illicit funds and recover stolen assets. The Group recently launched a global tax team to bolster the institution's cutting-edge work on tax and to liaise with other global institutions and build a more coordinated dialogue on international tax issues.[13]

[13] See www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance/brief/domestic-resource-mobilization.

C. World Trade Organization

82. The multilateral trading system helps to create the enabling environment for realizing sustainable development. The objective of sustainable development is emphasized in the WTO founding charter, the Marrakesh Declaration, in order to ensure that market opening goes hand in hand with environmental and social objectives.

83. The multilateral trading system has progressed towards concluding the Doha Development Round. The tenth Ministerial Conference of WTO, held in Nairobi in December 2015, resulted in a series of six ministerial decisions on agriculture, cotton and issues relating to least developed countries, including a commitment to abolishing export subsidies for farm exports. That commitment is the most significant reform of global agricultural trade in the history of WTO, in particular for low-income countries that depend on trade in agricultural products. The ministerial declaration also reaffirmed the central role of WTO in international trade governance.

84. Notwithstanding recent successes, the multilateral trading system needs to continue to deliver results and keep pace with the changing realities of trade. It should also support complementary actions and policy coherence at the national and regional levels. Regional trade agreements have become increasingly prevalent since the early 1990s. As at 1 July 2016, there were 460 such agreements, counting goods, services and accessions together, of which 267 are currently in force. Negotiations on megaregional agreements, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, are under way in parallel with the multilateral negotiations.

85. The regional trade agreements should not undermine the multilateral trading system, with WTO at its centre. The agreements have potential positive effects on developing countries that are not parties to them when they, by design or in practice, do not confine the positive, trade-liberalizing effects to regional trade agreement partners. Nevertheless, the agreements also risk undermining the relevance of the multilateral trading system, thereby potentially harming non-developing countries that are not parties to them. WTO is of critical importance for small developing countries and for the global economy as a whole. The multilateral framework of WTO gives even the smallest developing country members a voice in setting trade rules. A call was made in the ministerial declaration for discussions within WTO of the systemic implication of the agreements for the multilateral trading system and their relationship to WTO rules, as well as for the transformation of the provisional transparency mechanism, which is used to review the agreements, into a permanent one.

D. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

86. The fourteenth session of UNCTAD, held in Nairobi from 17 to 22 July 2016, under the theme "From decision to action: moving towards an inclusive and equitable global economic environment for trade and development", led to two major outcomes concerning the state of the world economy and setting the work programme of UNCTAD for the coming four years.

87. Those documents reaffirmed the role of UNCTAD as the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. Making globalization work for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals also became part of the mandate of UNCTAD to deliver prosperity for all. In the outcomes of the fourteenth session, UNCTAD was called upon to continue its research and analysis on the prospects and impacts of global economic trends and to carry out more work in areas of emerging importance to global economic governance, such as taxation, investment and electronic commerce.

88. Several initiatives launched at the meeting also serve to advance policy coordination in specific areas. For example, more than 90 countries agreed to a road map for ending harmful fishery subsidies by the end of 2017. A total of 15 international organizations and 22 private sector actors, including major multinational enterprises, launched an "e-trade for all" initiative, which is aimed at closing the digital divide between developed and developing countries in electronic commerce.

VII. Conclusion

89. The 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement break new ground in global economic governance. These landmark agreements provide an overarching guide for global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, and, accordingly, have been supported not only by the United Nations system, but also by major country groupings and international financial institutions. These stakeholders are aligning their work streams, in an unprecedented manner, with these United Nations-led outcomes and their follow-up processes. The action plan of the Group of 20 on the 2030 Agenda, endorsed at its summit in September 2016, is a case in point. This constitutes a major step forward in enhancing the role of the United Nations in global economic governance.

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Letter dated 14 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the ongoing actions of the Russian Federation towards the citizens of Ukraine (see annex).

I would appreciate your having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 69 (c) of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/71/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 14 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the ongoing actions of the Russian Federation towards the citizens of Ukraine

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expresses its firm protest against the actions, illegal and humiliating to people's dignity, by the Russian Federation towards the citizens of Ukraine who are being unlawfully kept by that State on its territory as well as in the occupied parts of Ukraine.

Despite repeated strong calls from the Ukrainian side and the international community and international obligations assumed by the Russian side, the Russian Federation continues to keep at least 29 citizens of Ukraine unlawfully in custody; dozens of citizens are being persecuted in the occupied Crimea; 16 citizens of Ukraine are considered missing; and 115 Ukrainians are being kept as hostages in the Donbas.

We have to admit that the capture, torture and persecution of Ukrainian citizens have become common practice for Moscow.

The cases of Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Ilmi Umerov, Ahtem Ciygoz and of many others are telling examples of the return of the Russian Federation to the political repressions and trials known from the era of Stalinism. It flagrantly violates all possible international legal standards in the protection of human rights, in particular, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The latest decision by the occupying Russian authorities to reject claims by the side of the defence in the case of the Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis, Ilmi Umerov, as well as his previous placement in a psychiatric hospital, are vivid illustrations of such inhuman policies.

There is an understanding in Ukraine that only the united and persistent efforts of the world leaders and the democratic community, to which human rights and human dignity constitute the highest priority, can overcome the present tyranny of the Russian authorities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine reiterates its appeal to the international community to exert all the legal and political measures possible towards Russia for it to cease its totalitarian practice of suppressing human rights and freedom of speech and to immediately release all Ukrainian political prisoners and hostages.